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UNCLAS SAN JOSE 002113

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR WHA/CEN, WHA/PPC AND PM
DOD FOR OSD POLICY:JALVERSON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL MARR PGOV SNAR XK CS

SUBJECT: NATIONAL GUARD STATE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM FOR COSTA RICA: NEW MEXICO MAY NOT BE THE BEST OPTION

REF: SAN JOSE 2060 (NOTAL)

¶1. (U) See action request, para 7.

¶2. (SBU) SUMMARY: Public Security Minister Berrocal is enthusiastic about the National Guard's State Partnership Program (SPP). Using his relationship with Governor Richardson, which dates from their service as UN Permreps, Berrocal believes he has a partnership agreement all but locked up with New Mexico. He is planning to visit New Mexico in November, and has told the media the trip is to conclude "an assistance agreement," presumably for the SPP. As part of the same trip, Berrocal has also requested the Embassy to facilitate a visit to SOUTHCOTM. Although we strongly endorse the SPP initiative as a creative way to provide the sort of training and equipment so sorely needed by Costa Rican security personnel, New Mexico does not strike us as the ideal choice as a state partner. Costa Rica would benefit most, in our view, from working with a state facing generally similar (and mostly maritime-based), trafficking, immigration and law enforcement challenges. We are confident that the National Guard Bureau, DoD, SOUTHCOTM and others involved in the SPP decision will select the partner best-equipped to meet Costa Rica's operational needs. END SUMMARY.

¶3. (SBU) Public Security Minister Fernando Berrocal remains enthusiastic about the SPP, first raised with him during the July 28-31 NDU-led workshop on national security strategy. During a September 8 meeting to discuss other issues (Ref), Berrocal told the Ambassador that he had twice talked about the SPP project with New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson, whom Berrocal described as an "old friend" from their days in New York as UN Permreps. According to Berrocal, Richardson was also enthusiastic and willing to come to Costa Rica after the U.S. elections in November to sign a partnership agreement. The Minister hoped this would lead to additional training and equipment for Costa Rican security personnel.

¶4. (SBU) Berrocal has seized on the New Mexico partnership idea. On September 19, his staff informed us that the Minister himself now planned to make an "official visit" to New Mexico November 12-14, to explore possibilities for security assistance for Costa Rica. Berrocal has already told the local media that he would sign an "assistance agreement" (NFI, but we assume he means the SPP agreement) with Richardson while in New Mexico. Berrocal has also requested Embassy assistance in organizing an official visit to U.S. Southern Command, preferably on Wednesday, November 15, after his visit to New Mexico. Fuerza Publica (police)

director Oswaldo Alpizar and Police Academy Director Carlos Roverssi would accompany Berrocal to New Mexico and Miami.

¶ 15. (U) Some of Berrocal,s staff, meanwhile, have been exposed to the general types of programs and assets that could be involved in an SPP agreement. September 6-7, Vice Minister Rafael Gutierrez, Coast Guard Director Carlos Alvarado, and officers from the Air Component of the Public Security Ministry visited ANG and USCG units in Puerto Rico, where they were briefed on U.S. air and maritime efforts against drug trafficking and illegal immigration, as well as search and rescue, operational coordination and maintenance programs.

¶ 16. (SBU) COMMENT: We strongly endorse the SPP initiative as a creative way to provide the sort of security training and equipment needed by Costa Rica while skirting the sensibilities of accepting direct military assistance. However, New Mexico does not strike us as the ideal choice as a state partner. If Puerto Rico were not already partnering with two other countries, that would be a logical pairing to us; the GOCR delegation,s visit there was successful and useful. Costa Rica would benefit more, in our view, from working with a state facing generally similar (and mostly maritime-based) trafficking, immigration and law enforcement challenges. We are confident that the National Guard Bureau, DoD, SOUTHCOM and others involved in the SPP decision will select the partner best-equipped to meet Costa Rica,s operational needs. Berrocal,s apparent closeness to Gov. Richardson may also yield some benefits for Costa Rica, but this should not be the sole or primary factor in identifying a state partner. More than political support, Costa Rica needs tangible, well-matched security assistance. END
SOMMENT.

¶ 17. (U) ACTION REQUEST: Please advise status of and likely timetable for SPP decision for Costa Rica.
FRISBIE